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ABSTRACT

Statistically, Thailand has eliminated gender disparity in access to education. Reasons that four women's conferences made very little impression on education reform could be no significant or overt discrimination against girls' enrollment and employment; education opportunity as more an issue of class (affordability) than gender (culture); and royal patronage of girl's education from the beginning. The Master Plan of Action for Education for All giving special attention to women has been implemented. National governmental offices seem unable to see anything for them to do for girls' education due to almost equal enrollment of boys and girls at all levels and the National Commission of Women's Affairs and women activists who take care of women's issues. Thai authorities--men and women--tend to ignore gender issues because of impressive statistical data on education enrollment. In fact, girls have less chance to enter education from the beginning, but tend to remain while boys tend to drop out gradually. Women's participation rate in nonformal education is high. Recommendations address teacher quality, integrating women's concerns, enhancing nonformal education's status, teaching style, gender issues, horizontal collaboration among governmental agencies, incorporating gender planning in the project cycle, safeguard against monopoly, promote transparency, and monitoring process. Appended is a chronology of education. (Contains 20 references.) (YLB)

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GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION in Thailand

ED 469 239

I. Introduction

Background

From Jomtien to Beijing : "Education for All"

Toward the end of the 20th century, global consciousness about human development reached its height and concerns for more human-centered development were expressed in a series of world summit meetings. This consciousness is an indirect result of the post-WWII international development launched in the 1960s. While the growth-oriented development strategy has significantly improved human capacity to overcome nature and hence increased the standard of living, it has also deepened and widened socio-economic inequalities at all levels and sectors. Through rapid advancement of communication and information technology, human misery and social injustice can no longer be hidden away from, or ignored by, the global community. These concerns for the future of humanity were the highlight of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development which culminated in the declaration of 1996 as the Year for the Eradication of Poverty, marking the beginning of 1997-2006 as the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Education was identified as a key tool to overcome chronic poverty.

> *Education contributes to the changing of human individuals not just in the managerial sense of developing human capital but in the more deeper sense of making new persons out of them, characterized by a heightened awareness of the human condition, positive and constructive outlook on life and a sense of commitment to human values. ... Education acts as a force that leads to the empowerment of human beings*
>
> (p. 11, UNESCO 1998)

The 4th World Women's Conference in Beijing (1995) identified *feminization of poverty* as the first among the twelve critical areas of concern in its declaration, ***Platform for Action*** (UN 1995). Because of the entrenched gender disparities in economic power-sharing in the process of globalization of the market economy, women's situation is likely to be worsened. Since women, especially of the majority poor households, play a key role in maintaining the welfare of the family members, this downward spiraling process for women will lead to further deterioration of society. To divert that trend, women need empowerment[1] not only in terms of having more opportunities but also in having access to training and education to increase their capacity. The underlying assumption is that *women lack required knowledge and skills to pursue desired goals or to effectively deal with inhibiting situations or circumstances* (UNESCO 1998, p.12). The *Platform* reiterates the promises made by various government members at the World Conference on *Education for All* (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990). The proposed action framework at the Jomtien Conference is as follows:

1. Expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities,
2. Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate and completion of primary education by the year 2000,
3. Improvement in learning achievement,
4. Expansion of provisions of basic education and training, and
5. Increased acquisition by individuals and families.

The general framework for action to meet basic education needs at Jomtien was expanded to specific needs of various target groups, including girls and women, at the 6th Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in Asia and the Pacific at Kuala Lumpur from 21 to 24 June 1993. The resolutions are summarized into two overarching concerns.

1 To empower means to give power, but not in the mode of domination. It is a sense of internal strength and confidence to face life, the right to determine one's choices in life, the ability to influence the social processes that affect one's life and the direction of social change (UNESCO 1998, p.12).

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The first was the importance of values, ethics and culture in education; the second, the need to improve the situation of women and girls within the education systems of the region. These two imperatives are integral parts of education as the foundation of socio-economic development.

The Conference ***recommended*** that Member States commit themselves to the:

1. Development of **targeted action plans** to increase access of girls and women to education at all levels,
2. Development of education **contents, materials, and methods** in both formal and non-formal systems, that take into account the unique needs and problems of women and girl learners and introduce **changes** which will contribute to their equal participation in all aspects of learning,
3. Priority placement of education programmes for girls and women, as well as training on **gender issues** for those in education, within the framework of national development plans which reflect an adequate analysis of the social and educational situation of girls and women, and
4. Establishment of **monitoring systems** to prepare a progress report on women's education to the International Forum in Education for All and the United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995.

The Kuala Lumpur recommendations were further developed into details at the Beijing Conference for both quantitative and qualitative measures. Meanwhile, the concept of ***basic education*** became clearer. Unlike other conventional education provisions which focus on rigid curricula designed through perceived needs of planners/authorities for national development, basic education focuses on the ***learning needs of the learners*** – all people. It includes literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving and knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for all human beings as participating members in society (UNESCO 1998, p.20).

Objectives

This study is part of a larger UNESCO project on comparing national policies and implementation mechanisms for girls' and women's education in India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Thailand. This paper concentrates on Thailand. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. To follow up the effort of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) in translating the international/regional declarations into concrete operational national policies,
2. To analyze the extent of implementation of these policies, i.e., the mechanisms and problems, and
3. To make recommendations on how to overcome the problems.

The areas covered are primary education and adult education/nonformal education (NFE). How are goals and plans for girls and women's education formulated (as a separate action plan)? What are the rates of participation? Who are involved in implementing the action plan: GOs, NGOs, etc.? Is there a specific unit responsible for implementation? What are the strategies to ensure effective and successful implementation of the plan? Is there any monitoring or reporting system to the government? How serious is the government commitment in terms of financial allocation? What are other sources of financial resources to ensure equitable access of girls and women? And what are the encouraging or discouraging factors for the progress of the plan?

Methodology

This study is based on 15 days of research in August 1998. Key persons in the Office of National Education Commission (ONEC), Office of National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) and Office of Non-Formal Education (ONFE) in Bangkok were interviewed as follows: Ms. Tipsuda Sumethsenee and Ms. Morakot Srisuk (ONEC), Ms. Mandhana Sangkhakrishna (Deputy Secretary General, ONPEC), Dr. Klaa Somtrakul (Deputy Director of ONFE), Ms. Parichaat Yenjai (Assistant Secretary to Director ONFE, and Coordinator of Women Division, ONFE).

A field visit to Lampang where the Northern Regional ONFE is located was made. Since Ms. Oranwan, the Coordinator of the Women's Development Section (linked to ONFE), was not available, Ms.

Sudjai Butr-akaat, Planning Division Chief, was interviewed. At the time of the visit, a women leadership training workshop was taking place. I took that opportunity to interview some women leaders about their experience with the services received regarding basic education provided by both FE and NFE. The informants were Ms. Siriporn Panyasaen (Member of Phichai District TAO, Lampang), Ms. Saengploy Mungtong (President of Provincial Women's Development Committee, Phrae), Ms. Nudsurang Woraphong (Director of Center for Coordinating Development Action and Legal Assistance for Women and Children, Chiangrai), Ms. Prapapun (Treasurer of Women Leaders Club of Lamphoon).

Official documents from ONEC, ONPEC and ONFE were consulted in addition to other published reports and research studies. The background on Thai education administration and achievements is taken largely from ONEC's publication Education in Thailand 1997.

II. Basic Education in Thailand: Policy and Implementation

Unlike most countries where girls' and women's access to education is much lower than boys and men, Thailand can boast, statistically, that it has eliminated such gender disparity. To understand how girls and women actually fare in basic education, we need to go beyond the numbers and appraise the whole education system in the context of the ever-changing political economic climate. This section traces the evolution of Thailand's modern education to give an overall picture of the structure of education administration and delivery. With this historical and political context, we can then localize how women and girls fare in the system today.

National Plans and Policies on Basic Education

General

Modern education provision in Thailand began in the 19th century sponsored mainly by the royal families and Christian missionaries. Under the 1921 Primary Education Act, children 7-14 years old were required to be in primary schools. After the 1932 coup d'etat which transformed the absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, the compulsory education was carried over. Although education was recognized as the key for national reconstruction and modernization, political conflicts between royalists, bureaucrats and militarists hampered the progress of human resources development in the country. The capacity for critical thinking was not only killed by dictatorial suppression but also dwarfed by a rote learning tradition. After successive military coups which put Thailand under a series of martial laws, education was merged with economic development and national security needs under Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat. Four strategic planning offices were established in 1959: National Council of Education (NCE, which became the Office of National Education Commission, ONEC, in 1972), National Economic Development Council (NEDC, later Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, ONESDB), National Security Council, and National Budget Bureau (Appendix 1). NCE was initially responsible for developing highly educated manpower to serve the immediate needs of the country for economic development, planned by NEDC. Thus its earlier national education plans concentrated solely at the university level.

The brief interlude of democracy bloom in 1973-76 unlocked people's ideals about education. ONEC was able to tap these ideas into guidelines for fundamental reform of the education system incorporated in the 4th National Education Plan. But the hope was overshadowed by the return of the conservative government. The possible significant attempt made during the 4th Plan period was to unify primary education by setting up the Office of National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) under the Ministry of Education (MOE). But disparity remained. ONPEC was to serve the majority children who lived outside urban boundaries. In the municipal areas, Ministry of Interior (MOI) was in charge whereas in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA), it was under the Education Bureau of BMA.

During the 5th and 6th Plans (1980-90), Thailand experienced an unprecedented rate of economic growth. The state became aware of the insufficiency of the existing education provision in responding to the changing needs for individual, community and national development. Thus the National Scheme of Education was promulgated in March 1992 leading to the 8th Plan.

Unlike the 1st to 7th Plans which emphasized increasing education opportunities, the 8th Plan

focuses on improving the quality of the learners. Its goal is to cultivate the younger generation to be visionary and ethical. The strategy is to emphasize provision of basic education, improving the teaching-learning process, and decentralization. The aim is to prepare Thai citizens to cope with the ever-changing world in the era of globalization. Thus the Jomtien Declaration was timely in giving legitimacy to overhauling the education system for national goals instead of political struggle between cliques and ministries.

Women-focused

The four world women's conferences seem to have made very little impression on the process of education reform.[2] The reasons could be (1) there is no significant or overt discrimination or prejudice against girls' enrolment and employment (when compared with other cultures, especially with the female infanticide of East and South Asia). The exception is the low female enrolment or literacy rate in the four southern provinces. The cause is often attributed to the conservative Muslim religious restrictions there. In the rest of the country, the rates are only slightly different (although girls are still less than boys). (2) Education opportunity is more an issue of class (affordability) than gender (culture). And (3) girls' modern education received royal patronage from the beginning (even though it was confined to Bangkok upper class families). Thus the visibility of highly educated women in the public sphere is obvious even in conventionally male dominated areas such as medicine, sciences and engineering. In addition, a few Thai women have entered and proven themselves in various leadership positions. Nevertheless, there is a *glass ceiling* for most professional women.[3] The issues of *glass ceiling* (invisible barriers preventing women from moving upward), *leaky pipe* (after primary school girls drop out more readily than boys) and *sticky floor* (cultural and psychological factors causing women to slip back) in girls' and women's advancement in education and careers to be effective and resourceful citizens have not been seriously looked into partly because of the pride and prejudice among Thai authorities and members of society who resist taking gender into account.

Implementation Mechanisms

Theoretically, the national/central machinery in educational administration and planning can be divided into two levels: national policy and planning level, and ministerial/ operational level. Three offices, ONESDB, ONEC and the Budget Bureau, are the responsible bodies for national planning (Figure 1).

ONESDB's task includes formulating the Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan, appraising ministerial and departmental development plans/projects, and monitoring, evaluating and giving recommendations on annual budgets of government offices. ONEC's task is more specific in proposing policy guidelines and recommendations for national education development at all levels in the form of a Five-Year National Education Development Plan[4] submitted to the Council of Ministers.[5] While ONESDB is responsible for overall monitoring and evaluating of the annual budgeting process, ONEC focuses on implementation of educational development plans by concerned agencies. The Budget Bureau only allocates government budget following NESD Plan and government policies (ONEC 1997, pp. 26-28).

The operational implementing ministries are MOE, MOUA (Ministry of University Affairs) and MOI. Their tasks are somewhat overlapping as shown in Appendix B (Figure 2). In addition there are various national committees to formally coordinate concerned education units. An example for the composition of concerned agencies for the National Education Commission is shown in Figure 3.

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2 The two large volumes of 20-year plans for women, admirably produced by the National Commission of Women's Affairs, are hardly taken seriously by the Thai authorities in general.

3 Tantiwiramanond, D. 1998. "Mainstreaming women's education and career in science and technology: A Thai case study", presented at AIT-GASAT Conference on Gender and Technology in Asia, Asian Institute of Technology, 4-7 August 1998.

4 It is also known as the National Education Scheme, established since 1992.

5 The Council consists mainly of the Prime Minister, Ministers of Education, University Affairs, Interior and others who provide specialized secondary or higher education.

Formal education

The three ministries are responsible for formal education but at different levels. **MOE** covers all levels of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary, post-secondary and some types of tertiary education). It also supervises private schools at all levels except the degree level. MOE is also in charge of matters related to culture and religion. For higher education, both public and private universities are under the supervision of **MOUA**. While MOE looks after mass education, **MOI**, through the Bureau of Local Education Administration under the Department of Local Administration (DOLA), administers and manages primary education in the municipal areas of each province. Separate financial support and supervision from MOI is given through the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to operate primary education in Bangkok metropolitan areas (Figure 4).

Besides these three major national bodies, various ministries offer specialized education at secondary or higher levels to serve the respective ministerial needs. They are Ministries of Defence, Public Health, Transport and Communications, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Justice, and Labor and Social Welfare (Figure 5).

At the regional level the burden of **MOE** is distributed into 12 educational regions (Figure 6). Each region consists of 4-8 provinces under the ***Regional Bureau of Education, Religion and Culture Development*** which oversees the quality of education, provides in-service training to teachers, evaluates educational projects and gives policy advice to regional educational officials. The regional bureaux are under the ***Office of the Permanent Secretary for Education*** (ONEC 1997, p.33).

Nonformal education

While the other two ministries are only for formal education, MOE also manages nonformal and out-of-school programmes (Figure 7). NFE was a reincarnation, in 1979, of the former adult education agency established in 1932.

III. Changes Since Jomtien

Translation of International/ Regional Declarations into National Policies

General

The framework for action in the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990)[6] was translated into the ***National Scheme of Education*** in 1992. The Scheme serves as the guidelines for improving the efficiency of the national education system to enable its citizens to respond to or cope with new challenges generated by the rapid changes in Thai society. The Scheme has four fundamental principles characterizing a desirable citizen:

1. A holistic individual, i.e., having balance in body (thinking/intellect, feeling) and mind (spirituality and morality), who is
2. Wise in utilizing natural resources without causing degradation to the environment,
3. Sensitive to Thai languages and cultures while transferring modern/western knowledge and technology so that they can optimally meet local needs, and
4. Is able to maintain a balance between dependency and self-reliance, essential for cooperation at individual, community and national levels, in promoting sustainable development (ONEC 1997, p. 50).

Thus the goal is to cultivate individuals through the education system to be *wise, spiritual, physically healthy and skilful in addition to being socially responsible* (ONEC 1997, pp.50-52). To reach this goal, 19 policy directives were established but may be simplified as:

1. Promoting family and community participation and networking
2. Improving quality of students and teachers (teaching-learning process, using Thai and foreign languages, research and development)
3. Expanding education opportunities (using modern technologies, encouraging private investment)

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6 A Thai translation of the Declaration was done in 1990 by ONEC.

4. Modifying education for target groups (gifted children, disadvantaged/handicapped, and ecclesiastical personnel)

5. Reforming the education administration system.

In these new policy guidelines, one is to extend the duration of a child in school from the compulsory Pathom 1 to 6 (or Grade 1 to 6) to include Mathayom 1 to 3 (or Grade 7 to 9) and changing the concept of imposing *compulsory* to *basic education*. The expansion of 6 to 9 years began in 1987, and will be further extended to 12 years of basic education as guaranteed by the new people-drafted constitution promulgated at the end of 1997 as a basic right of all Thai citizens. This may be the key policy to link with ***World Education for All*** advocated by the Jomtien Declaration.

The concept of promoting basic education for all becomes the first of the nine major programmes set as the targets for educational development in the 8th National Education Development Plan (1997-2001) (Figure 8) (ONEC 1997, p.62-67).

Women-focused

Official mechanism

As a signatory of the *World Declaration on Education for All* in March 1991, ONEC was responsible for formulating the Master Plan of Action for Education for All. The Plan was eventually endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 1994 for nationwide implementation (in the form of the 8th Plan as mentioned earlier). The plan gave special attention to women and the disadvantaged (ONEC 1997, p.128).

In practice, ONEC and ONPEC leaderships seem to be genuinely unable to see anything left for them to do for girls' education because of two perceptions. They perceive that they have achieved almost equal enrolment of boys and girls at all levels, and that enrolment at primary level is also almost 100%. They also perceive that women's issues are something already taken care of by the National Commission of Women's Affairs (NCWA) and women activists/ NGOs (violence against women or women's rights). There is no active dialogue on how gender studies or a gender lens could be useful for education reform. This may be due, partly, to the predominance of men at the decision-making level, and also to language. There is still no effective translation from English to Thai in the area of gender studies. Therefore, there is no discourse on most issues, let alone gender. On women's issues, most people are locked in their own impressions propagated by the media or militant activism.

In fact, a few years ago NCWA commissioned research and production of a set of texts to support women's studies efforts at the university level. But the integration process seemed to be marginal or informal, i.e., interested faculty of various universities, national and private, were invited to use the texts for teaching on a voluntary basis. The fact that Thammasat University's attempt to establish Women's Studies as an academic programme has been repeatedly turned down reflects an attitude of resistance on the part of MOUA.[7]

ONFE seems to be the only office that has some specific programmes for women primarily because its mandate is to serve the disadvantaged where women and children are part of it. The women-oriented curriculum consists of making Thai sweets, artificial flowers, flower arrangement and dress making. Other general training programmes do not set limits to men or women. These programmes include literacy, computer literacy and adult education in both general and vocational streams. The technical oriented programmes such as mechanics, masonry and carpentry, however, are still male dominated even though there is no overt rule to exclude women.

Besides the three major offices, there are a few special programmes to prevent girls of the high risk groups from being lured into the sex business. The "Saema for Life" programme is sponsored by the Office of the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Education specifically for northern girls to enable Grade 6 graduates to further their study in secondary education or college. Private businesses such as TV Channel 3 also provide similar scholarships. A few NGOs such as Education for Northern Daughters and Foundation For Women offer scholarships in cash (for formal or nonformal education) and kind (on-the-job training).

7 Only one national university, Chiang Mai University, has an academic programme on women's studies. But the reason was that the able Director, Dr. Virada Somsawat, was able to solicit large enough funding from international donors to build a whole and exclusive structure for her programme.

Semi-Official Interface between Government-Grassroots[8] Women Leaders in Establishing the Centre for Women's Lifelong Learning

The above mentioned programmes are scattered among different ministries without unified direction, or are still under the same influence of ***education for national goals*** without specifically differentiating men and women, or assuming both sexes have been treated equally. Only the disadvantaged women need special attention. This is one reason why ONFE has a plan specifically addressing women's needs with a corresponding programme for women's education. ONFE submitted a 200-page proposal for establishing a Centre for Women's Lifelong Learning (CWLL), detailing various programmes for women as well as providing examples of women's lifelong learning centres in other countries, to the Cabinet in 1996, but was turned down. The reason was that NFE already had a decentralized network, i.e., five regional centres, and that CWLL should be a division in each regional centre rather than establishing another centralized unit at the Bangkok office. At the time of this evaluation, the Assistant to the Secretary of the Director, Ms. Parichart Yenjai (who has a Master's Degree in women's studies from the USA), is in charge of coordinating CWLL programs among the five regional centres. (Subsequently, the Ministry of Education has set aside funds for operating the Centre.)

The Coordinator at ONFE is responsible for setting a national policy framework and encouraging counterparts in the five regional centres to identify specific agendas and strategies to implement women's programmes. This year (1998) was the first time to activate this responsibility. The national framework consists of five components: needs assessment of local women, literature review of Thai women's studies, conducting regional workshops for women leaders, promoting lifelong education for women, and creating newsletters or media for dissemination. The framework was transmitted at each regional workshop where each province in the region sent its representatives to attend. There, they collectively identified specific agendas and priorities. For example, the North wanted to focus on the issues of family, democracy and drugs. Field trips were provided to widen women leaders' world view. The agreed agenda and strategies were then implemented at the district and subdistrict levels.

It is not clear, however, how much budget was allocated specifically to this semi-official channel for coordination and implementation.

Innovation in Implementation Mechanisms

The 8th Plan corresponding to the Jomtien Declaration has created some changes in the education structure. To ensure not only wider opportunity for all but also continuous and lifelong learning, the new scheme is divided into (1) formal education or in-school learning (classroom oriented with specific curriculum) (Figure 9), and (2) nonformal education. The latter is to facilitate self-motivated learners and promote a community learning process. It has two components: (1) school-organized continuing education programmes using curricula equivalent to formal education, and (2) community initiated and mobile activities, or informal learning from various sources (ONEC 1997, p. 59).

Pre-Primary Education

The major body responsible for this level is ONPEC which absorbs about 54% of the total enrolment. Two other offices are Office of the Private Education Commission and the Department of Community Development, MOI (Figure 10).

Primary Education

The curriculum at this level was revised in 1990 and implemented in 1991 but became fully effective in all grades at the primary level only in 1996 (Figure 11).

Primary education is being supervised by many ministries as mentioned above. However, ONPEC of MOE is the major agency overseeing nearly 80% of the total primary school pupils whereas the other 12% enrolled in private schools are under the Office of Private Education Commission. Other government agencies are listed in Figure 12.

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8 It should be noted that Thai village women do not like to be labeled as 'grassroots'. They said, grass is already being stepped upon, the roots therefore will be much lower and more oppressed. They prefer the term 'women at the base or foundation of the society'.

To promote decentralization, ONPEC formulates an action framework which serves as guidelines for all provinces. The province in turn drafts a provincial plan for action and delegates to the district level to identify proper strategies for implementation together with subdistrict and village officials.

Secondary Education

MOE initiated a drastic curriculum reform in 1975 by introducing the credit system and abolishing the final examination centrally administered by MOE. Every school could evaluate its own students following certain group standards. In 1978 the curricula were further diversified and partially vocationalized initially at the lower secondary level, then at the upper level in 1981. The latest revision was in 1991 which became fully effective at all levels in 1993. The revised curricula have four components: core subjects (compulsory), prescribed elective subjects (to suit local contexts), free elective subjects (to suit the aptitude and interest of the learners) and activities (regulated by MOE rules). The former three components are prepared by the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Development, MOE, although the free elective involves the collaboration with local authorities.

At the secondary level, besides the two strata of lower (Grade 7-9) and upper (Grade 10-12), the education is divided into two streams: *General/Academic and Vocational*. For the General Stream, lower secondary education is provided by the Department of General Education (72% of the total enrolment), ONPEC (20%), and Office of Private Education Commission (6%) in 1996. There are special and welfare schools for the handicapped and disadvantaged but no mention about girls' and women's education since they are not the target groups in the Plan.

The Vocational Stream becomes apparent at the upper level. For upper secondary public school, 94% of General Stream students are under the Department of General Education, MOE. At the same time, nearly 50% of Vocational Stream students are under the Department of Vocational Education, MOE, and 45% in private vocational colleges. The rest of the students are under other departments of MOE (Figure 12) and other government agencies (Figure 13).

After the concept of ***Education for All*** was adopted at the end of the 7th Plan ONEC promoted lower secondary education as part of basic education. It began in 1987 when 38 provinces were marked as poverty stricken targets for promotion of transition to lower secondary school. After one decade, the transition figure increased from 1.2 million to 2.5 million (ONEC Aug. 98, p. 3). ONEC considered this a success in stretching the compulsory 6 years of education to 9 years of basic education. In the 8th Plan, ONEC aims to extend the duration further to 12 years and encourage wider community involvement.

Nonformal Education or Lifelong Learning

While the formal education system focuses on ***education for all***, ONEC promotes the concept of lifelong education by linking in-school (formal) education, out-of-school (non-formal) education and informal education. ONEC defines ***basic education*** as *all forms of education provided to improve the quality of life of the Thai people, so that they can live happily in society. They would thus acquire knowledge, competencies and skills in lifelong learning, enabling them to adjust themselves to various changes. They would also be competent in their careers, be capable of self-support, able to live with morality and dignity, continuously develop themselves, and participate appropriately in social development. Basic education shall extend from that at the primary level to the upper secondary level* (ONEC: draft 1998, p. 2).

Lifelong education implies that a person no longer needs to spend a continuous span of time at a certain stage of life in classroom instruction to learn and earn a certificate. The learner can plan to study whenever, whatever and wherever suitable to his or her life chances and needs. The state should make the three streams of education accessible to all and provide testing standards to accredit the level of each learner's achievement.

Lifelong Learning for Women: Northern experience (Lampang and Phrae)

Unlike the FE delivery system which confines boys and girls of particular age groups to classrooms at a specific location, NFE takes the outreach approach and is more flexible in its delivery strategy. Under a regional NFE centre, there are many provincial and district NFE centres. Each district NFE centre covers

4 *tambons* (subdistricts). NFE is designed to train those who have completed Grade 4. NFE personnel will visit *kamnans* (subdistrict chiefs) and village heads to inform them about NFE's services and encourage them to send people to study or receive training. Individual students can go to the NFE centre on the weekend to take courses offered by the centre. Groups of students in remote areas can receive training through NFE's mobile services.

For mobile services, NFE encourages village women to form groups of 15-20. Sometimes the teacher comes to teach in the village, or sometimes women from various villages gather at one mutually agreeable place to learn from the teacher. Each course takes about 15 hours. For dress making, NFE staff will provide paper to make patterns, but the women buy their own material-cloth, measuring tape, scissors, etc. Students do not have to pay for the teacher. The teacher does not need to have a degree but should have the skills needed for the training. A group can refer a resource person to the NFE regional office, which will then recruit this person as a temporary employee of NFE until the assigned task is completed.

The women leaders interviewed reported that the training is useful for themselves (capacity as leaders) and other women (skills for earning a living). For example, women can use their sewing skills to earn extra income in bulk sewing for subcontractors. Middlemen came from various nearby towns and cities to deliver and collect the garments. Local women prefer it because they do not have to travel far from home. Other popular training included flower making and mushroom growing.

One woman leader talked about the benefits of NFE on her life; it enabled her to effectively participate in helping other women. Or, in other words, through attending NFE courses and joining women's activities, she has been empowered significantly.

> *I was a disadvantaged child also. My parents did not allow me to study beyond Grade 4 considering that my future husband would have to take care of my well being. Women were the hind legs. But today women are the right leg, and men the left leg. My father was a farmer, he sent boys to school, girls remained at home. After Grade 4, girls usually learned hair dressing, sewing, weaving. Girls could do this work at home. But another factor was that there was no secondary school in the village, or the school was too far for girls to travel daily. (Boys could stay in a temple, but girls could not. Dormitories did not exist then.)*
>
> *Then I attended NFE courses and got a Matayom 6 certificate (or Grade 10), now I am studying at Rajapat Institute (formerly known as a teachers college) for a bachelor degree in rural development at the age of 52. My class has more women than men. We are mostly the older generation who missed the chance of education. Some return to school so that they can earn for a better livelihood.*
>
> *I am glad that I am active, and now as the president of the housewives group... I want to increase my knowledge to be a role model to other women showing that one is never too old to study. After I joined women's group activities, I gained more confidence-daring to think and speak. Earlier I trembled when I held the microphone. Now I have more knowledge and I am confident. Before I was only a shopkeeper, happily staying home and supervising my business and only wanted to be a good wife and good mother. I didn't know anything about the outside world.*

In spite of her age, she is determined to empower other women.

> *Our housewives group has a meeting every two months. I talked about more women who are less advantaged than us. We need to have social consciousness by providing a good environment and women must leap forward and realize their own full potential. I am not alone, other women began to see my points and trust me. This is the power of village women. I am proud of being here and working at this position.*

NFE is one avenue that women can take in developing their potential and capacity. There seems to be an enthusiasm among older women to learn.

> *There is also peer pressure for disadvantaged women to learn. They feel inferior when they can only write their names. NFE provides them a chance to upgrade their dignity.*

Intergovernmental efforts on women's development (Lampang and Phrae)

After a few decades of rural development efforts, local women talked about the positive aspects of the four major ministries, e.g., Agriculture, Public Health, Education (MOE) and Interior (MOI). Ministries of Agriculture and Public Health provide concrete assistance in their services, but community development (MOI) is more abstract, as it imparts new knowledge and initiates new women's groups. It also promotes women's income-generation skills as a means to increase women's potential. It gives funds for women leaders to take field trips or attend training to increase their knowledge and experiences. NFE's overall aim is to reach the disadvantaged in which women are one distinct target group; therefore, women can attend NFE courses designed for women. But in general, women do not feel inhibited in taking courses not specifically designed for women, nor go to the agriculture extension office for help when they want to carry out an agriculture project. Meanwhile, agriculture extension also provides home economics training, teaching women, specifically, about food preservation or processing. Apparently, there are many overlapping zones in services and resources at certain locations, while other areas may not have the availability or accessibility to any training at all.

IV. Achievements

General

Formal Education

Due to government policy in extending basic education from 6 to 9 years in 1996, the number of public schools increased as compared to those in 1993 (Figure 14). The increase was largest at the pre-primary level (from 36,384 to 43,918), to a lesser extent at the lower secondary level (from 5,661 to 7,911), and much less at the upper secondary level (from 1,787 to 2,817). While there was no significant change at other levels, there was a slight decrease in both private and public schools from 34,210 to 34,070 because of the lower population growth rate.

The expansion of pre-primary schools increased the enrolment rate from 44.1% (in 1990) to 81.8% (in 1997). The widespread distribution of public primary schools – to as far as remote hilly areas and the frontier – enables the majority of the 6-11 age group to have access to education. But because of the reduced birth rate and drop-outs (those accompanying their migrating parents), the enrolment has decreased from 6.9 million in 1990 to 5.9 million in 1996 (Figure 15).

The enrolment rate increased again at the lower secondary level from 53.7% in 1990 to 90.2% in 1996 (Figure 16) for the policy reasons mentioned above and the expansion of primary schools to the secondary level (Figure 17). This new opportunity, however, is still far from reaching the poor in the remote hinterland. Disparity is apparent between regions (Figure 18). The transition rates of students in the four southern provinces were still low in spite of the higher income level in the area. The key obstacle is attributed to religious beliefs and the imposition of central or Bangkok-based/Buddhist-oriented education which was sometimes considered alienating or irrelevant to local needs.

The transition rate from lower to upper level was 91.1% of the total graduates. This is separated into the general stream (from 43.5% to 49.6%) and the vocational stream (from 39.0 to 41.5%) (ONEC 1997, p. 119).

Nonformal Education

The total number of NFE students increased from 2 million in 1992 to 4.5 million in 1996. Figure 19 shows the distribution of students under different state agencies (ONEC 1997, p.127).

Girls and Women

Formal Education

One reason that Thai authorities, both men and women, tend to ignore gender issues is mainly because of the impressive statistical data on education enrolment. While overall it appears that boys and girls have equal access, i.e., almost 100% of the primary school age children (and later lower secondary school age) are in schools (Figure 20), the pattern is that slightly more boys (51%) are in pre-primary and primary levels. The rates became equal at the lower secondary level (50.1% for boys) and lower for boys (46%) at the upper secondary level. This reflects the fact that girls have less chance to enter education from the beginning. But once girls are in and have the opportunity to continue their study, they tend to remain while boys tend to gradually drop out. The higher rate of boys (53.9%) in the upper vocational secondary level but lower

rate at higher education level (48.4%) indicates that either boys are less inclined for academic study or need to obtain vocational skills to earn for their families.

Nonformal Education

The rate of women's participation in NFE has been high, with distance education having the highest enrolment rate for women. The female adult literacy rate was 86.2% as compared to 93.1% for males and reached 91.6% and 90.6% for female and male literacy in 1995. In 1996 the proportion of women participating in NFE was higher than men, except in adult general education as shown in Figure 21. However, the proportion of women participating in FE was less than men except in upper secondary education (Figure 22).

For special and welfare education, the number of students increased from 21,504 in 1992 to 35,607 in 1996. Male and female participation in both areas increased. Fewer girls benefited from special education than boys but slightly more in welfare education (Figure 23). Figure 24 shows that the female enrollment rates in special and welfare education in 1992 and 1996 were less than those of males at all levels from pre-primary to upper secondary except the upper secondary level in 1996.

Formal education for monks and novices is organized at lower and upper secondary levels. The number of monk and novice students at both levels increased from 1994 to 1996 (ONEC 1997, pp.135-140). There is a need to find the figures for nuns' enrolment.

Funding: GOs, NGOs and the Private Sector

Government funding has been the main source of financial support for education development in Thailand. On average, during 1987-97, the total government spending on education was 3.16% of GDP as illustrated in Figure 25. Since 1987, more than half of the central government budget has been allocated to pre-primary and primary schooling. The share of higher education and nonformal education increased substantially between 1987 and 1997 (Figure 26).

There is an increasing tendency for Thai philanthropy to donate for education than to the temple. The donations can be both in cash or kind. Giving scholarships for girls (particularly the high-risk group) to further their education in the formal or nonformal systems is increasing although there is no official record.

Foreign loans for educational development are from the World Bank, International Development Association (IDA), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Overseas Economic Cooperative Fund (OECF). Foreign funds specifically for women and girls are less significant in amount, therefore not easy to trace.

V. Recommendations

1. **Teachers' quality**. In spite of the increasing negative news about bad teachers, there are many good and low-profile teachers at all levels and sectors. Serious efforts should be taken to boost morale of these committed teachers. Once identified, they should be linked to a network to develop pedagogical techniques in teaching.

2. ONEC has been focusing on teaching-learning techniques and community participation. It should also take into consideration women's action in the community.

3. **Integrating women's concerns**. The draft proposal on CWLL (1997) should be utilized as it contains comprehensive information and suggestions. NFE already has a very responsive mechanism that is conducive to empower local people.

4. **Enhancing NFE's status**. NFE is considered second class to formal education, and classroom learning more prestigious than interactive group activities. Success stories of women and men who benefited from NFE should be made more visible in the media.

5. **Teaching style**. Even though the new policy gives learners central stage, most teachers are still attached to an authoritarian style. Refresher training to train teachers should emphasize the participatory teaching-learning approach. A lot can be learned from villagers. A women's group, Women Kamnan and Village Head Club of the North, has demonstrated an innovative training style-focusing on the participants-and this technique should be supported.

6. **Gender issues**. Gender responsive training should be given at all levels. In Thailand the issue

is beyond numbers. There is a need for discourse in terms of women and men relations, or gender, in the context of Thai history and culture in the age of globalization. Over-emphasis on women-centred debates has backfired and proven unsuitable for Thai culture. Therefore, a more acceptable strategy is needed to raise the consciousness of men and women to a level that promotes communication rather than alienation.

7. **Horizontal collaboration between governmental agencies**. The four major ministries (agriculture, public health, education and interior) should work together through the help of local NFE and women's groups to formulate a series of plans to support women's causes, considering rural women play a central role not only in maintaining their own family welfare but also to ensure healthy human resources for society as a whole. The current approaches tend to compete for the time of the women, and amount to wasteful spending of resources only to get photogenic results.

8. One informant pointed out, *GOs should work together rather than giving the same training superficially. They should work together to provide the right skills to village women. There is a great need for a monitoring and follow-up system. People need skills about fund raising among and for themselves. They need to realize how to make their group activities sustainable because it is good for their own families and for themselves. Otherwise, the NFE investment in skill training will be lost both in terms of money and knowledge.*

9. **Incorporating gender planning in the project cycle**. The use of the project cycle concept focusing on project design is a welcome sign. But planners should also incorporate gender planning to enhance participation. Ministries should move away from the vertical line of command for implementation. They should collaborate horizontally with equivalent offices in other ministries. The policy makers at the top level in particular should make genuine efforts to work with NCWA and CWLL through NFE.

10. The idea is to have a core group consisting of women and other local leaders to be a resource team to help design projects for NFE to launch community programmes. The design includes teaching style and measures of progress. Students must be able to do something, not just know how to do it. The evaluation also includes cumulative achievements and projects.

11. Government officials can benefit from the insightful suggestions of local women leaders. For example, on the project to help those returning to villages because of the economic crisis (in which returnees are given 1-20,000 baht each and get training), one informant commented, *these people do not need money to gain new knowledge but they need money to invest in something so that they can generate income, produce quality products, and sell in the market. But now the local/domestic market is also weak. Not many people have buying power. Such support should be revised to be action research on the occupational network for self-reliant community development through participatory activities. Villagers need training about the decision-making process and procedures for coordination among network members.*

12. **Safeguard against monopoly, promote transparency**. The idea of NFE allowing community control is good. But in certain areas, a monopoly can emerge as the incumbent takes it as his or her own business. The volunteer colludes with the local teachers to increase the number of groups (for example, flower making). The rush resulted in an inability to ensure quality and failure to provide a market outlet. There is a need to cultivate ethics as well as establish a monitoring/feedback system that discourages wrong-doing and rewards good practice.

13. **Monitoring process**. Four years ago, ONFE had a process of monitoring and follow-up. But that monitoring process was removed and emphasis was placed on research, i.e., encouraging teachers to write textbooks in sets. The monitoring was pushed down to the district level. But the district office did not have enough staff or financial resources to carry out effective monitoring, unlike the FE system[9].

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9 The chief has to take care of registration with the help of 7-8 staff to oversee registration of over 10,000 students in the district. In contrast, a director of a secondary school has over 200 staff to supervise a much smaller number of students. The compensation of FE is higher than NFE also which is not proportionate to the workload and number of staff. Because of insufficient staff, the NFE chief sometimes is said to be risking jail because he or she does not have enough time to check hiring, firing, promoting or spending in detail.

14. **ONEC and ONPEC.** In light of the current economic crisis which simply reflects the weak human resources of the country, or failure of human resource development-even the goal was set as early as 1959. One weakness is the lack of preparing people from an early age to be able to think critically. Rote learning needs to be replaced (but not by *throwing the baby out with the bathwater*, e.g., abolishing memorizing the multiplication table in school) by interactive learning where teachers need to transform themselves to facilitate students' learning process. The statistical achievement of ONPEC is impressive but there is an urgent need to improve its content. Gender and class analysis will be useful tools for improving the content of education and its delivery system.

VI. Conclusions

The issue of girls' and women's education is not seriously considered by ONEC and ONPEC partly because they consider their goal is to provide universal education. Thailand has single mindedly striven for that numerical universality and has therefore chosen to avoid unpleasant issues. As one local woman leader pointed out, there is a serious discrepancy in statistical reporting and what is really taking place in the community. As another woman leader commented,

> *Education should take an approach of discussion with villagers rather than questioning by experts and academics. We need to learn from experiences. If GOs want to evaluate their success, it can't be in terms of percentage, the indicators should not just fill up the questionnaire. Officials should go down to follow up how the training or project affects the quality of life in the community.*
>
> *They should reach out to the community (instead of meeting in a room). Community knowledge is woven into the life cycle-from birth to death. The knowledge is complex and has many dimensions. For example, on AIDS, media always observe the community at a distance but never ask the AIDS infected persons how they want the community to treat them, what do they think about the way the media has portrayed them. There is no feedback loop, just imposition.*

After two decades of world women's conferences, women's issues still have not gained much acceptance among Thai authorities. One frequent response is that women's situation is much better nowadays because there are women in all fields including engineering. (But not many will say women are still concentrated in the lower levels and do not make decisions.) This resisting or denial attitude makes it difficult to collect gender-based data because of the lack of sex-disaggregated data at the field level. In terms of ***Education for All***, women are among the disadvantaged. The general perception is that women's issues have to be either confined to women's rights (elite) or prostitution (deviant or deprived).[10] They are not serious matters for national development. Once a prominent senior woman professor questioned a group of prominent liberal men who were organizing a roundtable discussion on alternative development that why there were no women. One respectable public gentleman answered, *We all have our mothers and we respect them.* It is in this context that the situation of girls and women's education in Thai society needs a qualitative framework to assess the content of education that ensures capacity building to participate fully in creating a sustainable society.

In spite of the rather unpleasant attitude of many prominent men who are social and professional leaders, women in the communities are showing their leadership and creativity. The women's groups in the Northern region are worth taking as a role model for building up alternative development. These local young women leaders were able to make use of women's NFE programmes to empower themselves and other women. Even though women themselves do not feel the need to have an officially separate unit for women, they need a forum for dialogue among women and with men. ONEC in its support of learning networks should also give attention to women's groups rather than shying away.

The problems faced by Thai women cannot be solved without changing the sexual attitudes of men. This means gender discourse and dialogue that include men also. Without a gender responsive attitude, women's issues tend to be treated as locally specific problems. For example, the Northern region office does not consider prostitution as an issue. Only

10 Ironically, the emphasis on young females as victims of the sex trade has created an indifferent attitude toward the increasing number of boy prostitutes.

Chiang Rai and Payao which have a large number of sex service girls have programmes on this issue. This treatment is a bandaid rather than tackling the root causes.

Northern women leaders' groups are experimenting with basic education without knowing its name. They have made use of NFE women's programmes and general programmes. Education authorities should also learn from these women in addition to doing research on community process and avoiding gender issues for promoting basic education.

While NFE seems to be the only mechanism that currently has space for women's education programmes, there is no effective monitoring system for education as a whole let alone on mainstreaming women's concerns (or gender issues).

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APPENDIX I

Chronology of Modern Education System in Thailand since the late 19th Century

Year	*Event*	*Leadership*
Absolute Monarchy:	Western-Model of Formal Education for Modernization (Avoiding colonization by adopting Western civilization)	
1898	The first early form of National Education Plan	King Rama V
1917	First university founded	King Rama VI
1921	Compulsory Education Act, children of 7-14 year old	
Constitutional Monarchy	Modern Education for National Development (Economic growth through industrializaiton and urbanization)	
1932	Military + bureaucrat staged coup d'etat	
1936	NSE: general stream + vocational stream compulsory period (4 years) promote higher education, adult education, special education	Civilian government
1951	Govt. declared education development was part of national reconstruction and modernization	
1956	Nat'l Council of Universities (NCU) (following UNESCO's guide)	Field Marshal Pibul Songkhram
1958	Coup d'etat by FM Sarit, and imposed martial law	
1959	Nat'l Council of Education (NCE, former NCU) under the Nat'l Council of Education Act. Responsibility: education development for (state) universities (then five) level to solve manpower needs for national economic development. Council = PM + Rectors of all universities + Secretary General & Deputy of NCE [Other three strategic planning offices for national develoment were Nat'l Economic Development Council, Nat'l Security Council, and National Budget Office]	Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat
1961-66	1st Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Kamhaeng (61-75)
	Established Mahidol, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen Univ., and NIDA	
1963	Sarit died	
1967-71	2nd Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Kamhaeng
1967	Private colleges opened but under MOE	

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Year	Event	Leadership
1969	Private University Act Nat'l Council of Education Act: Change status from "Council" to "Office" to cover private colleges	
1972-76	3rd Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Kamhaeng
1971-72	FM Thanom staged coup imposed martial law	
1972	Military established Bureau of State Universities (fearing university students' unrest), and Office of Private Provision Education. The Bureau was against the idea of NCE to promote state university's autonomy. In effect NCE's direct influence over state universities was weakened but its responsibility (with no direct authority) was expanded to cover all education levels including both state and private universities which were under different ministries.	
1970s	World energy/oil crisis, end of Vietnam War	
1972	Office of Nat'l Council of Education —> Office of National Education Commission (ONEC).	
1973	Student uprise toppled military dictatorship, thus 1973-76 = liberal period	
1973-75	ONEC's research: "Efficiency in primary school" led to promote use of Thai language as medium for teaching	
1974	Systematic research studies + public opinions for fundamental reform of education system —> guidelines for 4th National Education Plan	
1975	1st World Women's Conference-Mexico City 1976-85 = UN Decade for Women	
1977-81	4th Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Sippanond (75-81)
1976	6 Oct. returned of conservative/ultra right government, partially adopted ONEC's plan i.e., Compulsory education period from 4 to 6 years	
1977	Established ONPEC to unify primary school system	
1978	National Education Commission Act to transform ONCE to ONEC. Responsibility: plan and policy for all levels of education provision + education development; coordinate between state agencies at all levels/kinds; follow up, evaluation, recommendation; set annual education budget; set standard for curriculum. Composition: Deputy PM + Permanent Secretaries of OPM / MOE / MOUA + Directors of DOLA/Edu. Bureau of BMA/Budget Bureau + Sec. Gen. Of NESDB + 7 experts appointed by various ministers + Sec. Gen. & Deputy Sec. Gen. of ONEC	

Year	Event	Leadership
1979	ONEC's research led to encouraging private and NGO's role in kindergarten provision, producing teaching aid, giving attention to disadvantaged groups, enlarging school size by collapsing small schools	
1980	2nd World Women's Conference-Copenhagen	
1980	Primary Education Act: universal provision of primary education, i.e., primary education provision reached all subdistricts	
1980	Transferred primary education admin. from MOI to MOE	
1982-86	5th Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Phot (81-87)
1981	ONEC's research on school mapping, began mingling with rural masses at district level; train provincial personnel to formulate provincial plans	
1985	3rd World Women Conference-Nairobi	
1987-91	6th Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Phanom (87-92)
1987-91	ONEC + MSU = BRIDGES project, for formulating 7th Plan	
1988-89	Rapid economic growth, family breakdown, increase social problem, AIDS epidemic, fierce global competition Inherent problems: disparity in income, urban-rural, migration See education = tool for "coping capacity"	
1990	Jomtien: World Conference on Education for All	
1992-96	7th Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Vijai (92-97)
1992	Nat'l Education Commission Act: Clarify scope of responsibility, e.g., plans for short and long terms, coordinate between offices & monitor/evaluate the implementation, innovate curriculum to meet nation's needs	
1992	Education plan has to be responsive to different demands: global competition, local ability to cope with rapid change and social deterioration Recovered ideals set in 7th Education Plan	
1993	Kuala Lumpur: 6th Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in Asia and Pacific (II. Education for Women and Girls)	
1995	World Summit for Social Development	
1995	4th World Women's Conference-Beijing (Platform for Action: B. Education and Training of Women)	
1997-2001	8th Nat'l Education Development Plan	ONEC: Rung (97-present)
1997-2006	UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty	

APPENDIX II

Unfinished gender issues

The following are excerpts from interviews with women informants as part of the assessment of the Thai education system.

Informant I & II

After discussing for some time, the interviewees began to realize there are still a lot of women's or gender issues that education refused to address, but in turn has been perpetuating stereotyping and double standards in sexual morals. They recognized the relationship between gender blindness in the education system and the increasing sexual violence and family deterioration in Thai society.

In the final analysis, all informants interviewed do not think that there is a need to have a separate programme for girls' and women's education. They think the current strategy does not provoke any serious discrimination against women, but separation will increase male resistance or jealousy unnecessarily. They do feel that the content of education and the teaching-learning process need to be more gender sensitive and improve in quality. They also do not think that the special projects to rescue girls of the high risk group (vulnerable to be sold into the sex trade), called ***saema for life*** is adequate, because boys are also now endangered. The negative consequence of expanding primary education is not only to increase the taxpayer burden but also to remove young boys from temple education, who because of custom or economic problems would be ordained and have a chance to become the transmitters of Buddhism. Without younger monks, society will be deprived of religious teachers.

One informant pointed out the need to have gender/feminist discourses. She argued that women's oppression began in the family. A happy family, in fact, suppressed the aspiration and feeling of the female members. If the woman accepted her fate (internalized her sacrificial role), the family is happy. If not she is the cause of family tension. This is reflected in some Thai soap operas in which the heroine's father is a drug Mafia leader. To expand his power, he forced his daughter to marry a high ranking police officer. These operas exposed how women are being used as the pawns of power. She also found that in poor rural families, parents will send the son rather than the daughter to school. This bias in the family is the building block of bias in society, she concluded.

This bias affects the middle class working/professional women too. Not only women have to continue the housework after office hours (compared with the husband who will only read his newspapers) but also for those belonging to Chinese families, the daughter-in-law has to shop for extra food and cook for ancestral worship during festival times (which is almost every other month!). The traditional image of a proper woman or lady is still strong and becomes a fetter or burden for working women. But for those full-time housewives, neither the husbands feel proud of their wives nor the women themselves think their roles worthy.

This is applicable to many male administrators. Verbally, they can analyze and appear liberal and progressive. But when asked if they help their wives at home, rarely will they give a positive answer. There are fads about good fatherhood, but again they are not sustainable, except among a minority. Most Thai men still can't see women as equal, the informant concluded. (Indeed, it is not uncommon to see a barber shop wall-full of nude pictures of women in suggestive poses. Recent widely publicized news about a 60-70 year old man raping a small girl is alarming. One ten-year-old girl was repeatedly raped by her uncle and grandfather. There is no analysis about what is the cause of such barbaric sex drive in men, and how it links to the inadequacy of modern education.)

The idea about women holding the pursestrings is becoming misleading. Husbands rarely are so truthful in turning all money to their wives. In slum areas, the husband gives his wife 500 baht which is supposed to be his wage. But he drinks and keeps on demanding money from her, often more than what he gave. It is becoming a classic story that a woman is busy selling something as well as tending her small children. The drunk husband will come back to

extort money from her, if unsuccessful, he will beat her hard. The informant said there are many women in jail today because they either killed or injured their abusive husbands. In an extended family, the mother-in-law will nag her home-bound daughter-in-law. A young woman staying at home, therefore, is under many pressures. But she often tolerates them for the reason that she has nowhere else to go to. She also thinks about the children's future.

So, with education opportunity, more and more educated women with careers do not tolerate such abuse. According to the informant, 50% of her female colleagues choose to remain single. There is a limit for an abused housewife to tolerate. Many women are in prison today because they killed their abusive husbands.

Informant III & IV

There are gender issues in our society. We need to look at them both vertically and horizontally. Because of social and cultural transmission in training we have been programmed to behave and perceive things that way. The point is not simply to pull women up to be equal *with men, but given that unequal position, can we treat them as equal human beings? It is not only women's right per se. It involves law, various activities that promote certain way of understanding about life and certain way we raise our children.*

Some women are proud to declare that they can't do anything because they have to carry their babies around. We need to change the idea of these women also. It is not enough to just demand that men give more opportunity, but women have to show commitment to improve themselves and participate fairly, too. If we want to tackle women's issues, we need to take action at various fronts.

The informants do not think it is necessary to separate women's issues, especially making it a separate center for the reason that this would make the effort to integrate women more difficult. One informant said that MOI through Community Development was the initial responsible agency on women and development programmes. They set up women or housewives groups. But NFE format is already flexible and decentralized responding to local needs. But this may be because NFE does not want to be left behind, so it also initiated a centre for women's lifelong education.

The other informant added, in education, there is no need to separate boys and girls as separate target groups. It is not just sexes, there are adults and children besides women who are disadvantaged. Instead of confrontation, we need to be sensitive, open minded and compromising in certain aspects. That way we can infiltrate our ideas rather than explicitly or overtly challenging which blocks the communication channel.

Besides, too much emphasis on women sometimes led men to feel jealous and resist cooperation. Many times women themselves accept violence, they internalize to be the receivers of such treatment. Gender has its significance. But a community can't be separated into two sexes, we need to live together peacefully. Therefore, for training of TAO we give training to both men and women members. Sometimes male participants demand male trainers.

Nevertheless, she also admitted that women do need a separate forum to give them a confidential and secure space that nurtures their capacity to express as well as builds up confidence. But a separate forum for women should be temporary. In the real world there are both men and women. So it is better to train both sexes together than letting women to try out by themselves with resisting men.

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
CWLL	Center for Woman's Lifelong Learning
FE	Formal education
GO	Governmental organization
IDA	International Development Association
IFE	Informal education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MOUA	Ministry of University Affairs
NCE	National Council of Education
NCWA	National Commission of Woman's Affairs
NEDC	National Economic Development Council
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NFE	Nonformal education
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OECF	Overseas Economic Cooperative Fund
ONEC	Office of National Education Commission
ONFE	Office of Nonformal Education
ONPEC	Office of National Primary Education Commission
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
RISD	Regional Institute for Skill Development
RIT	Rajamangala Institute of Technology
RTG	Royal Thai Government
TAO	Tambon (subdistrict) Administration Organization
TCSC	Teachers Civil Service Commission
TERO	Teacher Education Reform Office

U.S. Department of Education
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